

Matthew 1:18-25 "What Child Is This"

The Incarnation is worthy of undistracted contemplation & unrelenting adoration. That God would become the Son of Man, that we through faith in Him would become sons & daughters of God.

The virgin birth is something that we as believers hold near & dear to our heart. It's absolutely fundamental to our faith. A truth of such vital importance that our salvation is *impossible* apart from it...

In one respect our Savior had to be a Man, an angel couldn't die for our sins (#1 angels are immortal in their nature, they don't suffer death as do we) but beyond that they don't share in human nature; therefore they don't qualify. It takes a Man to stand in the gap on behalf of man. We need, what the bible describes as a "kinsman redeemer". One who shares our blood, who can represent us *accurately* and pay the necessary *penalty* on our behalf...

Yet we also realize that our Redeemer, our Savior had to be more than a man. Because regarding men, all have sinned & fallen short of the glory of God. There are none that are righteous, no, not one. So there's not much (& by not much I mean not a thing) a fallen man (a sinful man) can do to atone for other sinful men. How can you make something clean from the unclean, how can sins be washed away by a sinner? It can't be done. So we have a bit of a problem, an *angel* can't help us, an *animal* can't help us... We need to have a Man represent us yet it has to be a perfect Man, but there's only 1 who is perfect & w/out sin who meets the criteria & that is God.

So God, in His great love for us sent His only begotten Son. Being born of a woman He's fully human, being begotten of the Father He's fully God, holy, perfect & w/out sin & such fully qualified to be our Savior. You see apart from the virgin birth Jesus is just an ordinary man, & if he's an ordinary man he's a sinner & if he's a sinner he can't be our Savior. But the virgin birth validates & authenticates that Jesus is much more than an ordinary man. Fully Man to be sure, but fully God as well & as such (being w/out sin) He would save His people *from* their sins! Praise God? Praise God...

It's interesting to me how brief Matthew's account is of the birth of J.C. It's really being told to us from Joseph's perspective (which is proly why it's so short, its coming from a man's point of view, men don't talk too much ☺). Ask my wife, she tries to pry details out of me all the time but I just keep it short & simple (unlike my bible studies ☺).

When you get to Luke's gospel you have Mary's perspective, so as you can imagine it's much longer, ☺ filled w/all kinds of details that we don't get from Matthew (for which [I might add] we are grateful). **In Luke's gospel we get the angelic announcement, the mysterious, miraculous account of the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit bringing life to Mary's womb, the song of Mary, the interaction between her & Elizabeth (J.B.'s mom).** We get the shepherds watching out over their flocks by night, the angels appearing to them, informing them of the birth of the Savior & saying "Glory to God in the Highest & on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" I mean it goes on & on, not so much in Matthew ☺. However, Matthew's account is the inspired, inerrant word of God just the same. Let's look at it together.

Vs 18

One of the things that blows me away about the bible is that for as overwhelming as the reality is of what's happening, it's can be written to us in the most underwhelming of fashions. ☺

I mean, have you stopped to consider the enormity of what Matt just said? After betrothal, before coming together Mary was found w/Child of the Holy Spirit! Wait what? That's *incredible!* Apart from God *unbelievable!* It's a *miracle!* & Yet it's summed up in a relatively (seemingly) uneventful sentence... It's stated w/such simplicity that we read over it almost nonchalantly & just sorta casually pass it by, but we need to hit the brakes! We need to sit & soak this up for a minute!

Sometimes some of the most powerful things stated in the bible are summed up in a single sentence & we're just left to deal with it. One thing you discover as you study the word of God (& I say this from time & again) is that you will never find it defending itself, only *declaring* itself. Here's one for ya, **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."¹** The very 1st Vs of the bible drops a bomb; it's like, "Here's a 'big bang' for ya!" "In the beginning God created the incalculable expanse of the entire universe." No explanation; only declaration. Listen, God feels no need to defend nor explain Himself to me or you.

He's God! The One who gives life to the dead & calls those things which do not exist as though they did. He's the One who declares the end from the beginning, the One who spoke & the world was, He just said the word & galaxies were called into existence... Think about that. I'm not sure that we fully appreciate all that that entails.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (Ge 1:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
² The New King James Version. (1982). (Ps 147:4-5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The universe is a pretty big place☺! I mean, 1.3million earths would fit inside the sun! & The sun isn't that big of a star in the scope of things. One of the largest stars we're aware of they've called VY Canis Majoris. It's so vast that over 9.2 *billion* suns could fit inside it's diameter (each containing 1.3 million earths). *But don't worry it's not real close to us, you'd have to travel (at the speed of light) 4892 yrs to visit it. So if you could travel at 186,282 miles per second, you could visit VY Canis Majoris in 4892 yrs ☺.* Now, we live in the Milky Way Galaxy of which scientist estimate there are approximately 300 billion stars. Beyond that scientists estimate there are between 1-200 billion galaxies, each containing billions of stars... (In the beginning God created the heavens & the earth) Yet the bible declares, *"He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite."*² Yet for all of that the bible tells us that God has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand & has measured heaven w/a span (Isa 40:12)... The enormity, the power & energy contained in the universe is but a small thing to God...

He has no need to defend Himself, but He will declare Himself; He has no need to defend His word, but He will declare His word. So we find the bible declaring itself historically (this is what did happen). It declares itself prophetically (this is what will happen) & it declares itself miraculously, (for God there's no such thing as impossibility).

From the very beginning God had declared prophetically/miraculously that a virgin would conceive & bring forth a Savior. Genesis Ch 3, directly after the fall God declared to the serpent that the "Seed" of the woman would crush his head. Women don't carry the seed, they carry the egg. But God said there would be a woman whose Seed would crush him, would defeat him & bring salvation to man.

Flash forward several thousand yrs to a little town called Nazareth to a young lady by the name of Mary; the angel Gabriel comes to her, tells her that God has a plan for her & though she's a virgin the Holy Spirit will come upon her, the power of the Highest will overshadow her & she will conceive & bring forth the Son of God...

Listen, If we can get past Gen 1:1, than the rest of this is no test for our faith at all... If in the beginning God created the heavens & the earth, formed man from dust, breathed into his nostrils & gave him life; than for God to overshadow a young woman & create life into her womb apart from human relations is nothing at all; He is the author of life.

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Ps 147:4-5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now here's something else we want to consider quickly. Even though Jesus was *born* into this world, He didn't find His *beginnings* in this world. Jesus has always existed as the eternal God (John 1:1 & 14 right?) *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."*³ *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*⁴ Remember, if Jesus were conceived & born as any other Child, He couldn't be God. He had to enter the world through an earthly mother (fully human) but He couldn't have an earthly father, so Mary was found w/Child of the Holy Spirit.

& Matt is careful to tell us that this happened while she was betrothed but not together w/Joseph yet. As you may know marriages were arranged in that day, but about a year before the marriage they would enter what was called a betrothal period. They were considered married but they weren't together, it was a time to ensure the fiancés purity, making sure she didn't turn up pregnant & all & then they would consummate their marriage, come together physically. Betrothal was a union that could only be annulled by divorce.

This is where Mary & Joseph were in their relationship. Just making sure things were as they were supposed to be, ensuring her purity, fulfilling the betrothal & all & then they would be married. But lo' & behold Mary comes up pregnant...

Now what do you do? We don't know if she tried to explain the situation (even if she did it sounded insane) "It's a God thing", how would you respond to that? Joseph was no different, he wants to believe her, he loves her, but no way... how could you do this!?

Vs 19

In other words he could've legally made a public spectacle of her, took her to the city gates & made a big deal of it. But he didn't want to do that, he loved her, even though he was hurting, he still wanted to help her in some way. He didn't want to humiliate her beyond what was already going on... You know Joseph often is overshadowed by Mary (& we understand that) however we need to realize that God chose Joseph as well. He was a moral & upright man, yet he was also a merciful man. Moral & merciful; he was slow to anger & wanting to do the right thing.

I mean, this rocked his world, think about it... everything was going along great, things were happening just as they'd planned & then suddenly everything changes.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 1:1-2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 1:14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The direction shifts (& at least for the moment) it's what seems like for the worse. Here he is, in love w/this young lady, she's set to marry him, the future is looking bright, then she shows up pregnant... even better, she's claiming innocence & that this is a miracle of God.

How many of you realize that when God purchased you w/the blood of J.C. that there is no part of your life that is off limits to Him? He owns what we might call the "editing rights" to our lives, if He wants to change this, or remove that, or add something altogether different; even if we don't understand what He's doing or why He's doing it, it's His prerogative to do so.

No doubt Joseph is praying over all this, thinking about it, wanting to do the right thing, so he chooses rather than humiliate her publicly he'll just divorce her privately.

Vs 20-21

Wow! Can you imagine that? We note his prudence again. He, "thought about these things." He didn't snap to a rash decision. It would be so ez to be, "U weren't pregnant, now you are pregnant, that can only mean 1 thing!" Well, ordinarily "Yes" ... but he thought about it. Again we're not told if she sought to explain to him how the angel visited her & what had happened via a miraculous overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, but even if he was trying to believe her it's like he just couldn't wrap his mind around it (& understandably so).

Evidently while he was thinking about it he drifts off to sleep & an angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream (was it Gabriel? Perhaps we don't know). Regardless the angel addresses him, "Joseph, son of David." That's going to alert you right there, he's called by a title that references his legal lineage to the throne of David. Trust me, this wasn't a common way that he was addressed, something of significance is happening here.

& Once again things are stated so "matter of factly" that we might just read over it & not really stop to consider them if we're not careful. This angel highlights a # of things here... #1 "Joseph, you're to marry Mary." Often times before we marry we want to make sure we're in God's will, well Joseph knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that it was God's will that Mary was to be his wife. #2 The pregnancy wasn't natural, it was supernatural, mysterious, miraculous, the work of the Holy Spirit. #3 The baby would be a boy. #4 He was to name Him "Jesus". & #5 His name would announce His mission. "Jesus" means "The Lord is Salvation" & even so He would save His people from their sins...

The Person in her womb would be called "Jesus", the Plan for this Person... "He will save His people from their sins."

The plan would not involve a physical *liberation* from Rome, but a spiritual *salvation* by removing the *alienation* from God that has been created through their sins. He would save His people from their sins; from sin's *penalty*, from sin's *power*, & ultimately from sin's *presence*. Jesus is the name above every name. Peter made it clear in Acts Ch 4, **"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**⁵

You see, there was a purpose to His coming, the story doesn't end w/a little baby boy lying in a manger, Christ is born, hallelujah the end. No! It only begins there. He had a reason for becoming a Man & dwelling among us, it was to save us. We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, we all like sheep had gone astray, we'd turned (each of us) to our own way & the LORD has laid on *Him* the iniquity of us all... The wages of sin is death & w/out the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin, for the life of the flesh is in the blood & it's the blood that makes atonement for the soul (Lev 17:11).

So the purpose of His coming would involve suffering & death to bring salvation to as many as would call upon His name, He would save "His people" (all who would call upon Him, believe in Him) from their sins. D.L. Moody once said, "To create, God had only to speak; To redeem, He had to suffer." Jesus would be the substitutionary sacrifice for you & me, He would die in our place & the angel made Joseph aware of this before Jesus was ever born...

Vs 22-23

I hope you're noting how rich God's word is with affirmation after affirmation of who Jesus is. We have the Person (Jesus), we have the Plan (to save His people from their sins) & now we have the Prophecy. God wasn't shooting from the hip, He wasn't acting randomly or acting haphazardly, this was the fulfillment of Prophecy that Isaiah had uttered some 700 yrs earlier.

There was to be a supernatural birth, a mysterious & miraculous pregnancy, the virgin would conceive & bring forth a Son, & they shall call His name "Immanuel" which is translated (Matt tells us), "God with us". What's that, is this saying that Jesus is God? That's exactly what this is saying. The name "Jesus" spoke of His *operation*, His delegation (to bring salvation) "Immanuel" speaks of His *identification*, "God with us".

This is where the contemplation & the adoration (regarding the incarnation) should be placed into overdrive. What Child is this? "God w/us".

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ac 4:12]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“God”, the One who spoke & the worlds were? The One through Whom all things were made & w/out Him nothing was made that was made? The One who knows the end from the beginning, who gives life to the dead & calls those things yet to exist as though they’re already in the past, who knows my thoughts before I speak them...? Him? Yeah... Him.

God... But check this out. God; *with us*. Translation? We are not alone, God is with you. There is a void in the heart of every human being that aches w/loneliness, but God is w/you, He wants to live *in you*, to forgive you & make you new.

This is the miracle of the incarnation; how God condescended, came down to save man; adding the nature of His own creatures to His Divine nature, accepting the weakness, the frailties & dependencies that we have. Before humanity was added to His deity; Jesus was never tired, was never hungry or cold or thirsty, but He became one *of us*, identifying w/us that He might save us.

Something else the incarnation demonstrates to us to the compatibility between the unfallen *human* nature and the divine nature; they can be joined. It speaks to you being truly made in the image of God.

& If God can come to us, than we can come to God. You don’t need a priest or some kind of intercessor to introduce you to God, God has taken the initiative to introduce Himself to you in the Person of J.C.

Vs 24-25

Joseph is a perfect picture of Proverbs 3:5-6. He trusted in the Lord, didn’t lean on his own understanding, he acknowledged Him & God directed his path. He didn’t waver, he did as he was told. He obeyed the word of God, what a great example of unwavering obedience he becomes. Even though people would look at him strange, there would be a weird stigma attached to them, he obeyed the Lord. I think sometimes we worry more about what others may think/say rather than simply obeying the Lord.

When it says he, “did not know her until she had brought forth her 1st born Son” it simply means that he didn’t have sexual relations w/her until after Jesus was born. However after His birth they had a normal marriage relationship. Mary did not remain a perpetual virgin, the bible is clear that Jesus had brothers & sisters (2 of which [James & Jude] wrote 2 epistles we have in the bible).

Listen, God had said that He would bring a Savior (His Son) into the world. He’d declared it prophetically, that it would happen miraculously. & That’s exactly what happened. God keeps His word...

& He has said that He will send His Son into the world again; God keeps His word & everyday brings us closer *to the day* that we will see Jesus face to face & then we will be saved not only from sins penalty & sins power, but sins presence as well. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

God Thank You for Your goodness, the greatest gift humanity could ever hope for, the gift of Your only begotten Son bringing salvation to the world. You have not left us alone, but You are with us & God we say, "Have You way *in* us. Be glorified *through* us" we bless Your holy name.

Salvation is here, J.C. wants to set you free. The price has been paid, you have only to believe it & receive it. Jesus shed His blood for you, laid down His life for you & rose again the 3rd day & if you will believe in the Lord J.C. you will be saved. Turn from your sin, trust in Him today.